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RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI IMMEDIATE 2027
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR IMMEDIATE 1708
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAHORE 000067

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SUBJECT: POLICE FOCUS ON DOMESTIC EXTREMISTS AS MARWAN INVESTIGATION PROGRESSES

REF: (A) LAHORE 64, (B) LAHORE 66

Derived from: DSCG 05-1, B,D

¶1. (C) Summary: Senior police contacts have told post that the current investigation into the March 30 attack on the Manawan Police Training School is focusing on domestic extremist groups with ties to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Police are under pressure to concentrate on Baitullah Mehsud's Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in part due to Interior Advisor Rehman Malik's statement linking them to the incident and in part due to western media coverage of Mehsud's claim of responsibility for the attack. Given that the mode of attack differs significantly from TTP's usual operations -- primarily suicide bombings -- police are continuing to examine the possibility of involvement by designated foreign terrorist organizations Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which is believed to have been involved in the March 3 attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore; Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, which carried out the November attacks in Mumbai; southern Punjab extremist group Jaish-e-Mohammad; and various domestic al-Qaeda affiliates. Senior police leaders are again under public pressure for ostensibly ignoring an intelligence warning about a possible attack on police facilities passed by the Lahore Corps Commander earlier in the week. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Senior police contacts shared with post their initial insights into the Manawan Police Training School attack on March 30. The initial investigation has shown that an as-yet-undetermined number of terrorists entered the facility from neighboring residential areas by climbing over two side walls. Initial media reports of an attack on the front gate were inaccurate. Upon entering the facility, the terrorists threw grenades and then opened machine-gun fire on recruits, who had gathered for their morning parade. The death toll, according to police sources, is actually far higher than reported in the media and may be over 50. More than 90 police remain confined to local hospitals for treatment of injuries sustained in the initial attack.

¶3. (C) Police sources claimed that following the attack on the parade ground, the terrorists moved into the main building on the training school's campus and barricaded themselves inside. Police officials in the main building were held hostage by the terrorists or remained in hiding in locked rooms in the facility for the duration of the attack. Terrorists sporadically exchanged fire with police, Elite Force, and the Rangers paramilitary force for the duration of the nearly eight-hour siege. Pakistan Army forces provided air support and advice to the rescue and clean-up operation that was primarily conducted

by the Elite Force and Rangers. During the final operations, four terrorists blew themselves up to avoid capture, and two were killed by security forces' gunfire. Police sources claim that there are still six unidentified bodies from the incident that may be either terrorists or police personnel. The total number of terrorists involved in the attack is unknown. Police believe that at least one terrorist was injured but escaped.

¶ 14. (C) Police said that they have detained two terrorists in connection with the incident. Both have reportedly been transferred to the custody of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) for questioning. Police are confident that one of those detained took direct part in the attack and was captured in the course of the operation. Pictures of his detention have been prominently displayed in local media. Police sources claim that the individual is primarily a Pashto speaker, but they admit that he may come from either northern Pakistan or southern Afghanistan. Police sources are not confident that the second individual was actually involved in the attack and believe that he may have been mistakenly detained.

¶ 15. (C) Interior Minister Rehman Malik told Ambassador March 31 that as many as four people have been arrested in connection with the attack. The one attacker, who announced "I am Muslim" was, according to Malik, linked through phone intercepts to Baitullah Mehsud's second in command. Malik said this individual arrived in Lahore 15 days before the attack; he had been crossing back and forth across the Pak-Afghan border for some time. Three additional persons were picked up in the vicinity carrying arms and are under investigation. Malik also saw possible links to Jaish-e-Mohammad, but how they are linked to Mehsud in this attack was unclear.

¶ 16. (C) Police sources admitted to post that their investigation
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has yet to reveal clear leads to any terrorist organization. Senior police leaders are focusing attention on the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in large part due to the Minister Malik's public statement claiming the group's involvement. Local media carried prominent denials of responsibility from the TTP's spokesperson. However, Reuters is claiming that TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud has accepted responsibility in an interview with its reporter -- a story which has subsequently been picked up by BBC. Police sources, however, are somewhat skeptical of TTP's ability to mount such an attack, noting that it differs significantly from the group's traditional suicide bombing methodology. Police claim that in addition to TTP, they are also strongly focusing on the possibility of the involvement of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which is now believed to have been responsible for the March 3 attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore, and Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, which carried out the November attacks in Mumbai and is angered by the continued detention of its leaders in Pakistan. Police are also looking into possible connections to Jaish-e-Mohammad, a terrorist group based in southern Punjab, and local al-Qaeda affiliates.

¶ 17. (C) Police leaders have been embarrassed by the revelation in local media that the Lahore Army Corps Commander had passed a credible intelligence report to both the Inspector General of Police and the Capitol City Police Officer Lahore warning of a possible terrorist attack against police installations in Lahore. Police sources confirmed to post that such a report had, in fact, been received. The embarrassing incident mirrors a similar one where intelligence agencies had provided police with advance warning of a possible terrorist attack on the Sri Lankan team in advance of the March 3 incident.

¶ 18. (C) Comment: Post believes that it is too early in the investigation to draw any firm conclusions regarding which terrorist group was responsible for the March 30 attack. The focus on domestic groups with links to Pakistan's troubled Afghan border region seems sensible. If TTP is shown to have played a significant role in the March 30 attacks, it would mark a significant shift in operational methodology for the group and

demonstrate a new tactical ability not previously displayed. Post fully expects that the newly restored Shahbaz Sharif government will use the incident as a pretext for massive reshuffling within the Punjab Police designed to replace those officers appointed during governor's rule and seen as loyal to Governor Taseer or the Pakistan Peoples Party. End Comment.

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